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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO SCA/A, S/CRS, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR WOOD  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CENTCOM FOR CG CSTC-A, CG CJTF-82 POLAD

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRT LASHKAR GAH, HELMAND PROVINCE: MUSA QALA RECONSTRUCTION  
AND POLITICAL UPDATE

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Reconstruction efforts continue in Musa Qala (MQ).

The District Governor, Mullah Salam, continues to work well with the stabilization team and is conducting Shuras outside the District Center (DC) in an effort to overcome continued Taliban intimidation of rural citizenry. Residents are pleased the high school renovation is complete and students are back in school. Task Force Helmand and the Afghan National Army coordinated the movement of convoys to the city, and security inside the DC remains stable.

#### Musa Qala Politics

[1](#)2. (SBU) Salam continues to work well with the PRT stabilization team in MQ and meets daily with them and the Shura to review security and reconstruction efforts. He continues to urge faster implementation of construction projects but has displayed less interest in the administrative details of project implementation or local government. Haji Zahir, leader of the MQ Shura, has emerged as Salam's project coordinator and MQ administrator. Salam remains the face and voice of the MQ government and is comfortable addressing security and political issues but not the details. Zahir is a natural administrator and is able to keep Salam and the Shura working together to resolve development issues. The two men have established a good working relationship, and this division of labor supports the implementation of development projects.

#### Expanded Outreach

[1](#)3. (SBU) Salam is an excellent public speaker, and this week he moved outside the DC and conducted several outreach Shuras around MQ. At Landiwa village on February 16, 150 locals listened to Salam deliver a strong message calling on them to support ISAF and urging them to work with the UK forces to defeat the Taliban. Salam repeated the same message at Wasak village on February 19, where 200 villagers greeted him with great respect and welcomed the message to support ISAF against the Taliban. Salam consistently called on local residents to support ISAF and the GIRoA, a message that TF Helmand welcomed. Salam's willingness to move outside the wire and interact with the people is expanding his personal base of support from the DC to across MQ District.

#### Development Update

[1](#)4. (SBU) This week the Afghan National Army facilitated the delivery of World Food Program (WFP) supplies. TF Helmand delivered USAID-provided equipment for the renovated high school.

Stabilization officers and teachers spent several days organizing the new equipment, and by the end of the week, school attendance was over 500 children. The central bazaar road is now under construction and is about 20 percent complete. Two flood control projects just outside the DC are now under construction. Residents have told PRT officers this week that the reconstruction projects, and the jobs created, are encouraging more area residents to risk intimidation and seek work in the city. Every day about 280 residents show up for the cash-for-work program, and contractors employ several dozen residents.

#### Security

15. (SBU) MQ residents told PRT officers that the security situation in the city is acceptable and that Commander Koka is doing good work, but that they do not trust many of the Afghan National Police (ANP). This week TF Helmand received credible reports that several suicide bombers were targeting Salam and the MQ Shura, but TF Helmand and Koka moved quickly and tightened security around the DC.

Residents said Koka punished several ANP this week for stealing WFP packages and more should be done to control the "bad ANP." The two UK police mentoring teams are working with Koka to improve policing and control the ANP force, but monitoring the 300-plus ANP in the city is a challenge. Salam reviews security operations constantly and pushes Koka very hard to keep the criminals, Taliban supporters and terrorists out of the city and to improve the ANP force.

16. (SBU) The main obstacle to project implementation remains intimidation of project recipients or those seen to be "collaborating" with the international community. Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development reports that although they have had some initial success with the villages and project identification,

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nothing has started yet as recipients are afraid to begin work on the projects. Intimidation and insecurity on the roads also remain problems outside the security cordon of MQ town. PRT will work with TF Helmand and local officials to build more sources of information for the people about the good things happening in MQ and to build more confidence in the government presence in the district, with the goal of giving people the confidence to resist the Taliban and their intimidation.

17. (SBU) Two months after liberation, Musa Qala has seen continued infrastructure and political development, but the ANP require additional mentors and training to improve their capacity, and construction of the Central Mosque is delayed. Continued helicopter shortages restrict the movement of civilian staff to the city. This has delayed efforts to develop budgeting and governance capacity in MQ. These issues need to be resolved to maintain reconstruction momentum and improve governance capacity.

WOOD